

Camp near Vera Cruz April 9th 1847

Dear Doctor,

I received your letter dated 11th February a few days before the surrender of Vera Cruz. I assure you I found ample time to read it over more than once, though stationed at that time in sight of the walls of the city enduring a brisk cannonade from the front and expecting an attack from the Rear. It was just at this stage of the matter that a brisk fire of musketry commenced some seven or eight miles to the rear, and in a few minutes a courier came riding by at full speed with orders to our general, the report was immediately spread and for a while believed that Col. Harney was engaged with Santa Anna's advance guard and that he was advancing to the relief of the city with 20,000 men. Orders came from Genl. Quitman to prepare to move. Every thing [sic] was alive in a few moments and every body [sic] hobbled into line & was there ready to sally forth to meet the young Napoleon – swearing by all that was good and bad that he should loose the second leg on the same field where he lost the first. But mirabilo dictus where we set out on the march we found ourselves in a contrary direction from the firing, and only moved on to extend our lines a little further around the city. It afterwards appeared that Col. Harney had engaged a body of lancers, and the whole ended with the loss of two of his men.

This is one of the little incidents that transpired during our stay around Vera Cruz. There are a great many of a similar nature. It would be impossible to give you a definite idea of the manner in which we spent our time on of what took place for the space of time that lapsed from our landing up to the surrender of the city. It will however be sufficient to put your imagination at work when I tell you that to get to our post on the lines we had to pass through a severe fire of the enemy without being able to return it - to penetrate thick Chaparrall – wade through lagoons, climb perpendicular sand hills of 100 feet in height, where we were often found in the predicament of having our feet knee deep in sand, our arms, haversack, canteen and Blankets on our shoulders and the scorching sun over our heads. We seldom had water and when we obtained it such as could not be used freely. As for eating we were glad to get crackers and pickled pork. And a good bed upon the naked grass where a fellow could ly [sic] without having covered up head and years, with the sand, was esteemed a luxury, with all these to endure we had the exquisite pleasure of having cannon balls whising [sic] around us and over us. There [sic] lancers gave us not trouble, we soon became expert at dodging, and the waste of Mexican ammunition afforded no small share of amusement to our Army. Our men stood all this well, there were but few sick and the rest were in high spirits. We had many amusing little sayings and doings which show the carelessness and indifference which was at length manifested towards the fire of the enemy. One night I had lain down quietly on my blanket in perfect silence, with men all around. I had nearly fallen asleep when I heard from the castle the loud thunder of one of her guns. The report was dying away when the whosing sound of the shell soon gave indication that our part of the lines had been their mark. Onward it came nearer and nearer until it seemed approaching our regiment and striking in the midst of us, but a minutes more and it burst beyond us. All laughed except a few pale faces, and I heard some one close by dry out, as if addressing the castle, "Look here! Mind how you shoot this way! Folks is here!" at another time I had a hearty laugh,

at a similar occurrence. An order had been issued against all firing in our camps. Soon after this a whole volley was fired from the city – balls and shells were flying in every direction. Some members of our Company came running up with a very serious face. “Look here Captain why don’t you have them men over yonder arrested for firing? I don’t think its fair.” Our men gave the castle the name of Elephant during the siege. They say “the ole fellow look a pretty fierst, but those bombs frightened him out of his wits and he would not fight. The beast is tamed.” Well it is true it may well be called an elephant. It is the strongest fortification extant. Its no use trying to describe it. It cannot be done.

We shall have a good many elephants to see however before the war is over, and those which we will regard in worse light than the castle, disease, hunger, thirst, blistered feed and aching bones and all that mass of deformities which infest our onward progress here. We will move from here in about 8 days. Many of our men are sick, several been discharged and will be home. Roberts has resigned. I cannot say if his resignation will be accepted. J B Moragne

Doctor, I have read this letter and for the first on of my own written since I left, I don’t believe you can read it and I have a strong notion of throwing it away upon reflection, however I will send it as I know you don’t value the potage – with this provided that you will try to read it and then burn it without letting any one else see it. Perrin has a slight attack of dissentery [sic], Martin is sick, he has received notice of his appointment and will be on horse. Selleck and myself have been (?) a little in Vera Cruz. We all did theatre last night. Remember us kindly to Mrs. Wardlaw your friend, J.B. Moragne.